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From the Editor's Desk

For the Spring 2009 issue of *Muscogiana*, we offer a treasure trove of local history and genealogy. In the "Uprising in Columbus: Race and Class in the 1934 General Textile Strike," Russell Pryor, a doctoral student at Carnegie Mellon University, examines the role of race in the 1934 textile strike in Columbus. Pryor argues that despite their "militant labor activism" during the Great Depression, white textile workers in the city "remained completely within dominant racial attitudes" and adhered to a "politics of whiteness," excluding African Americans from their unions and participation in the "Uprising of '34." In the end, the strike did little to transform the racial views of white workers, whose exclusionary policies would linger deep into the twentieth century. In the second piece, Eric McRoberts, a history major at Columbus State University, offers a genealogical survey of the family of John Mel Cutliff, a prominent planter/lawyer from Putnam County, Georgia. For our third piece, I have compiled a number of antebellum slave ads from Columbus newspapers to demonstrate how such sources could be used by anyone researching slavery in Muscogee County. And in the fourth and final piece, Justin Krieg, Director of Planning and Programs for the Historic Columbus Foundation, provides an overview of his organization and its all-important efforts to preserve the history of Columbus.

This spring, we bid a fond farewell to Sean Norman, who has served as editorial assistant of the *Muscogiana* for the last three years. Sean has departed for graduate studies at the University of South Florida in Tampa. We wish him well. He will be missed.

Finally, I would like to again invite readers to send in their submissions. We need good book reviews, articles, queries, primary sources, and genealogy for upcoming issues. If you're working on something, please send it to me at: Gary S. Sprayberry, Department of History & Geography, Columbus State University, 4225 University Avenue, Columbus, GA, 31907. Or you can send an electronic copy to sprayberry_gary@colstate.edu.

Gary S. Sprayberry

Editor

On the Cover:

Janice Persons Biggers House, 700 Broadway, Columbus, Georgia

Courtesy of Historic Columbus Foundation

The Uprising in Columbus: Race and Class in the 1934 General Textile Strike

by

Russell Pryor

In Columbus, Georgia, the sixty-five employees of the Georgia Webbing and Tape Company went on strike in early July 1934. The mill remained closed for more than a month before management announced its intention to break the strike and reopen on 10 August. Some workers decided to return to work, but many refrained. Other textile workers in the city came to reinforce the ranks of the strikers, setting the stage for a confrontation.¹

Unable to enter the factory on foot, one group of workers—G.D. Beasley, J.H. Tipper, and their wives—attempted to drive through the picket line on 10 August. Already on edge, the strikers and their supporters attacked the car, shattering the back windshield and assaulting Ms. Tipper. Incensed, Beasley backed into a field, took out a pistol, and fired two shots into the crowd. One bullet missed, but another hit Reuben Sanders, a thirty-year-old Swift mill worker.² The next day, the *Columbus Ledger* reported, "Mr. Sanders, who was shot in the left eye the bullet ranging downward, breaking the jawbone and passing out through the neck, died at the city hospital Friday afternoon at 5:55 o'clock." Columbus police promptly arrested Beasley, Tipper, and G.E. Clarke, a strike sympathizer, charging all three with murder. Local police also arrested two other union activists: Charles Storey, for assault with intent to murder, and Verna Morgan, for disorderly conduct. Speaking

¹ *Columbus Ledger*, August 1, 11, and 15, 1934; Janet Irons, *Testing the New Deal: The General Textile Strike of 1934 in the American South*. (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2000), 116-7.

² *Columbus Enquirer*, August 10 and 11, 1934; Interview with Reuben Sanders' Family, August 17, 1990, Series II: Interviews, Subseries B: Transcripts, Box 5, Interview 46, Uprising of '34 Collection, Southern Labor Archives, Georgia State University Library, Georgia State University, Atlanta, Georgia (referred to hereafter as "Interview with Reuben Sanders' Family"). The wives' names are not given.

of Clarke's arrest, local union leader E.B. Newberry complained, "city police are planning to pin the murder on one of our boys."³

Sanders, a father of three with a young wife eight-months pregnant, had been a long-time member of United Textile Workers of America (UTW) Local No. 1605 in Columbus. His wake and funeral on 12 August served as a lightning rod for popular discontent among the textile workers. In the few hours that Sanders' body lay in state at the local UTW hall, four to eight thousand workers filed past. The funeral procession across town involved more than 600 automobiles. Historian Janet Irons termed it an "uprising."⁴ It was, however, an uprising of *white* textile workers.

The magnitude of Sanders' wake and funeral is indicative of the strength of white textile workers' organizations in the city, as well as the depths of their racial divisions. Sanders' son, Rex, later recalled that it "was probably the biggest funeral that Columbus has ever had" with "everything from Ku Klux [Klan] to Woodmen of the World in it." While Rex spoke disapprovingly of Ku Klux Klan (KKK) involvement, his mother recalled the organization with fondness. Sanders' widow said that the KKK walked right beside her at the funeral. She said that Reuben had never been a member of the KKK, and that "they just moved in...like they were protecting me and the kids." She concluded that the KKK "was all right. I'll always believe in them."⁵ The funeral, followed quickly by labor strikes at the largest mills in the city, is generally viewed as the start of the general strike in Columbus.⁶

Sanders' murder and the "uprising" that followed set off a chain reaction of events that culminated in a much larger confrontation in Columbus and throughout the textile industry. For three weeks in September 1934, 170,000 southern textile workers, along with 200,000 of their brethren in the North, went on a general strike, crippling the national textile industry. It represented a high water mark for working class rebellion in the South. The strength of the national strike peaked in its second

³ *Columbus Enquirer*, August 14, 1934; *Columbus Ledger*, August 11 and 24, 1934.

⁴ "Interview with Reuben Sanders Family"; Irons, *Testing the New Deal*, 116-9; *Columbus Enquirer*, August 13, 1934.

⁵ "Interview with Reuben Sanders Family"; *Columbus Enquirer*, August 13 1934. During the interview, Rex Sanders explains that he was a small child at the time of his father's death, but that he had heard about it all of his life. His mother is interviewed with him and does not challenge his narrative.

⁶ Irons, *Testing the New Deal*, 116-7; *Columbus Enquirer*, August 16, 1934.

week, but by the end of the third had collapsed in total failure. Across the five southern textile states of Tennessee, North and South Carolina, Alabama, and Georgia, a combined force of 23,000 armed guards, deputies, and national guardsmen clashed with striking workers. Governors of all five states declared martial law and called out troops to crush the uprising. The collective action of the bosses and the federal and state governments left the UTW—the union that had spearheaded the strike—a shell of its former self.⁷

For decades, the 1934 general strike was a taboo subject in southern textile communities. Many scholars, too, failed to take note of this watershed event. In fact, it was not until the 1987 publication of *Like a Family: The Making of a Southern Cotton Mill World*, by Jacquelyn Hall, James Leloudis, Robert Korstad, Mary Murphy, Lu Ann Jones, and Christopher Daly, that labor scholars began to break the silence and outline the contours of working class formation in the early twentieth century. Drawing on hundreds of oral histories and paving the way for future scholarship, *Like a Family* opened many analytical doors. Yet race was the one subject they left largely untouched. In the *Politics of Whiteness*, however, historian Michelle Brattain made the issue of race central in her study of workers in Rome, Georgia. Instead of interrogating interactions between black and white workers, Brattain argued that understanding *white* as a racial category was central to comprehending textile workers' worldviews, organizations, and daily lives. Her decision to focus on textile workers' whiteness followed the same rationale other scholars had used to avoid talking about race.⁸ Simply put, for most of the industry's history, especially before the 1960s, whites represented the overwhelming majority of the textile industry's workforce. Black workers were an isolated minority and have been largely excluded from the traditional histories of the industry's working class before integration. While this essay will build upon Brattain's ideas about the whiteness of the textile working class, black workers' voices and their experiences reside at the center of the narrative.

⁷ Irons, *Testing the New Deal*, 3-4 and 9-10.

⁸ Irons, *Testing the New Deal*; Jacquelyn Hall et al., *Like a Family: The Making of a Southern Cotton Mill World* (New York: W.W. Norton and Company, 1989); Michelle Brattain, *The Politics of Whiteness: Race, Workers, and Culture in the Modern South* (Athens: The University of Georgia, 2004).

Historian Janet Irons argues that while the Chattahoochee Valley was the most antiunion region in Georgia, Columbus "consistently" defied the norm.⁹ In fact, the city had a long history of militant labor activism. But while Columbus textile workers may have been among the most active in the state, they remained completely within dominant racial attitudes. The UTW locals in the community were no more racially integrated than the rest of the region.¹⁰ And their conduct during the summer and fall of 1934 illustrates this point. Despite high levels of worker militancy, strikers in Columbus and throughout the South remained committed to what Michelle Brattain has termed a "politics of whiteness." Though black workers made up a minority of the workforce, white strikers and their organizations excluded them from any meaningful participation. Such exclusionary policies had deep roots in the organization of southern industry and the formation of its workforce.

Industrial employment in the region had historically been limited to whites. Though imposed by employers, white workers generally supported these racially based hiring practices. It shaped how they thought about their work, themselves, and their bosses. Workers associated their *whiteness* with their employment in the mills. Their economic demands, as well as the organizations they formed to push them, embodied this racialized understanding of class.¹¹ Black workers made up a relatively small percentage of the workforce and their exclusion did not significantly impact the outcome of the strike. Still, white textile workers' commitment to *whiteness* made race a central component of the strike.

⁹ Irons, *Testing the New Deal*, 70; Melton A. McLaurin, *The Knights of Labor in the South*. (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1978), 69; John Earl Allen, *The Governor and the Strike: Eugene Talmadge and the General Strike, 1934* (Master's Thesis, Georgia State University, 1977), 33 and 37-39. Working class activity in the city dates back at least to the 1880s when the Knights of Labor organized a union among local textile workers. The organization was so strong that in 1886 the union won a ten percent wage increase for 2,000 local workers without even going on strike. Union activity came in waves, but the local working class maintained a strong tradition of resistance. Local workers launched major strikes in 1900 and again in 1919.

¹⁰ *Columbus Enquirer*, September 2, 1934. This article appeared in a 50-page Labor Day insert, and lists the 20 union locals in the city and their regular meeting times; Interview with Cleveland Walton and Richard Allen, July 22, 1990, Series II: Interviews, Subseries B: Transcripts, Box 5, Interview 21, Uprising of '34 Collection, Southern Labor Archives, Georgia State University Library, Georgia State University, Atlanta, Georgia (referred to hereafter as "Interview with Cleveland Walton and Richard Allen").

¹¹ Irons, *Testing the New Deal*, 3, 4, 9-10, and 122-123; Interviews with the Organizers and Workers at Columbus, Georgia ACTW Union Hall, December 28, 1991, Series II: Interview, Subseries B: Transcripts, Box 4, Tape A101-109, Uprising of '34 Collection, Southern Labor Archives, Georgia State University Library, Georgia State University, Atlanta, Georgia (referred to hereafter as "Interviews with the Organizers and Workers at ACTW Union Hall"; Hall et al., *Like a Family*, 340.

There was an organic bond between race and working class identity in the textile industry. The industry in Columbus developed in the decades before the Civil War, and, keeping with regional trends, local mill owners generally employed free white labor rather than enslaved black labor. This racially based hiring practice continued throughout much of the twentieth century. While the exact numbers of black workers in the local mills at the time of the 1934 strike is unclear, by 1930 they made up only five percent of the southern textile workforce. As local historian Bill Winn points out, "This has had profound effects on this city, and on the mill culture here, which is almost exclusively white." One such effect was that working class identity developed alongside a white racial identity. "In time," writes Brattain, "whiteness resided not only in the identity that workers brought to the job but in the job itself." This was further intensified by what Brattain refers to as the "myth of common white interest," which formed a key component of the ideology surrounding the rapid expansion of the southern textile industry during the 1880s.¹²

Both employers and white workers in Columbus played active roles in maintaining the city's racial order. The fact that mill owners regularly exploited the racial divisions within the working class as a "deliberate policy" to undermine collective action does not absolve the active participation of white workers in this process, nor does it undercut the importance of their perceived "common white interest."¹³ Cultural theorist Stuart Hall's ideas on the nature of popular culture relate well to the ideological relationship between racism and class struggle. He argues that ideas are not merely developed by elites and then imposed on the working class. Working class people are not simply dupes. He points to the interplay between what people believe, based on their own real life experiences and perceptions of the world around them, and what the elites think they believe and want them to believe.¹⁴ While the mill owners used racism for their own ends, white supremacy, in

¹² "Bill Winn's Tour of Columbus, Georgia," July 21, 1991, Series II: Interviews, Subseries B: Transcripts, Box 5, Interview 18, Uprising of '34 Collection, Southern Labor Archives, Georgia State University Library, Georgia State University, Atlanta, Georgia (referred to hereafter as "Bill Winn's Tour of Columbus, Georgia"); Brattain, *The Politics of Whiteness*, 19 and 47; Arthur F. Raper, "The Southern Negro and the NRA," *Georgia Historical Quarterly* 64 (Summer 1980): 128-145.

¹³ "Bill Winn's Tour of Columbus, Georgia"; Brattain, *The Politics of Whiteness*, 19.

¹⁴ Stuart Hall, "Deconstructing the 'Popular'" in *Cultural Resistance Reader*, ed. Stephen Duncombe (New York: Verso, 2002), 187 and 190-192.

many ways, spoke to the real life experiences and psychological needs of white textile workers. This held true despite the fact that the imagined racial unity undercut the potential for class solidarity and collective action. The "psychological wage" of whiteness, as W.E.B. Du Bois termed it, had roots in the degraded social position of southern mill workers. White workers generally accepted and, in turn, helped build the racism then dominant in society, basing it on their own perceived social inferiority as well as their perceived commonality with other whites.¹⁵ And it was against this racial backdrop that the events in 1934 unfolded.

In *Like a Family: The Making of a Southern Cotton Mill World*, Jacquelyn Hall and her co-authors astutely observed that the 1934 general strike "cannot be understood as a single event, comparable to citywide general strikes or strikes by national unions against integrated industries," for the actual experience of rank-and-file workers "differed from community to community and state to state over a large and varied region."¹⁶ While this observation of the complexity of the strike situation must not be understated, the roots of the strike on a national level can be presented in a generalized manner with some minor variations based on local conditions. The Great Depression and its impact on the industry formed the immediate setting. The federal government and industry responses to the crisis also helped shape workers' actions.

While the 1929 stock market crash plunged the entire American economy into a deep depression, the textile industry had been feeling the effects of an economic downturn since 1923.¹⁷ The onset of the crisis led textile owners to expand efforts to cut costs, increase profits, and deal with a disorganized industry notorious for its cutthroat competition.¹⁸ They sought to deal with the

¹⁵ David R. Roediger, *The Wages of Whiteness: Race and the Making of the American Working Class*, 2d ed. (New York: Verso, 1999), 12-13; Margorie A. Potwin, *Cotton Mill People of the Piedmont: A Study in Social Change* (New York: AMS Press, 1968), 58-61; Brattain, *The Politics of Whiteness*, 19 and 47; "Bill Winn's Tour of Columbus."

¹⁶ Hall et al., *Like a Family*, 340.

¹⁷ James A. Hodges, *New Deal Labor Policy and the Southern Cotton Textile Industry, 1933-1941* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1996), 7, 20, and 22; Allen, *The Governor and the Strike*, 10 and 22-23.

¹⁸ Hodges, *New Deal Labor Policy and the Southern Cotton Textile Industry*, 16-19. The textile industry was particularly chaotic because it was dominated by hundreds of small firms. This was especially the case in the South. In 1934, 588 of 1,000 cotton textile mills were in towns with a population less than 5,000. Only 150 firms in towns with more than 75,000 people, and these were mostly in New England. Many of the 588 mills were in small towns that were completely dominated by the company, and this isolation helped to create a gulf between the bosses and the outside world. The make-up of the industry and the relative isolation of a large percentage of the mills made competition intense and undermined the potential for industry-wide collective organization among workers or bosses.

crisis in a number of ways, including efforts at increasing productivity while at the same time cutting costs through new machinery and scientific management techniques. The textile owners also sought to promote stability through self-regulation.¹⁹

Streamlining and increasing the speed of the production process represented a common effort among textile industry leaders. These efforts, however, plunged the traditional existence of many textile workers into chaos, particularly in the South.²⁰ Despite the inroads made by the textile industry, the region was still primarily agricultural and its people shared a culture of independence. The instability of agricultural life, however, pushed many into the mills. One black Columbus worker later recalled, "Well...all I could say I couldn't eat until I went to the mill, but when I went to the mill I could have a little money then. That's why I wanted to get in there so bad. So that's why I go."²¹ While many workers left their farms to work in the mill, some workers did both. Farmers would work in the mills between seasons to supplement their incomes. Richard Allen, a local black worker, said of his thirty-five years in the mills, "I worked off and on. You can quit and come home and farm. The boss man would let me farm...and when I get through [sic] gathering in the crop, I go back to my job."²² Accustomed to a large degree of control over their work, high rates of absenteeism were common in this early period. Many mills operated on a "spare hand system," which dictated that a quarter of the workforce would be utilized as replacements for the absent workers. This tradition of worker control over the production process had begun to significantly erode in the decade before the 1934 strike. Many workers perceived this as an attack on southern culture and manhood.²³

¹⁹ Hodges, *New Deal Labor Policy and the Southern Cotton Textile Industry*, 17 and 47; Hall et al., *Like a Family*, 295; Irons, *Testing the New Deal*, 7.

²⁰ Hodges, *New Deal Labor Policy and the Southern Cotton Textile Industry*, 28-29; Irons, *Testing the New Deal*, 16 and 22.

²¹ "Interview with Cleveland Walton and Richard Allen."

²² "Interview with Cleveland Walton and Richard Allen"; 1930 US Census Data for Muscogee County, Georgia (<<http://fisher.lib.virginia.edu/collections/stats/histcensus/>>). The census found that only about 617 people, black and white, lived on farms in Muscogee County. This number does not take into account workers with farms in neighboring Harris, Russell, or Chattahoochee counties that also worked in the mills. Allen's comments suggest that he was not alone in his reliance on farming and working in mills, but the exact numbers of his fellow workers in a similar situation are unavailable.

²³ Irons, *Testing the New Deal*, 16 and 22; Hodges, *New Deal Labor Policy and the Southern Cotton Textile Industry*, 28-29; Allen, *The Governor and the Strike*, 22-23, and 69-70. The "spare hand system," which typically made up about a quarter of the workforce at the time, was essentially a temporary worker system. Due to high levels of absenteeism it was necessary for an employer to keep a certain number of workers on call to ensure that the factory was able to maintain production.

A December 1934 article in the weekly UTW newspaper described a favored tactic of the bosses to increase productivity and cut costs: the "stretch-out system." Labor journalist Winfield Gaylord wrote,

To the general public the 'stretch-out' in the work of textile mills is a vague term. To the stockholders it has an application only to dividends. To mill managers it means more production with less labor cost. To the mill worker it means driving, speeded-up machines, running ever faster, with more and more human effort to keep up with them, and as energy fails, losing hope of ever catching up with them.²⁴

Annie Griggs, a white Columbus mill worker, simply described the stretch-out system as when "they gave us more frames to run for the same money."²⁵ The institution of such managerial methods had already provoked smaller, sporadic strikes across the South between 1929 and 1934. More than any other issue, the stretch-out was the dominant grievance expressed by rank-and-file workers leading up to the 1934 revolt. It also dominated the concerns of black workers, though their grievances were generally not limited to this single issue.²⁶

Textile owners formed regional and national organizations on occasion to combat crises in the industry. A new sense of urgency was injected into the situation by the mid-1920s. In 1926, the northern-based National Association of Cotton Manufacturers and the southern-based American Cotton Manufacturers Association joined to form the Cotton Textile Institute (CTI). The CTI's efforts at promoting stability through industry self-regulation failed as the organization, in an attempt to impose voluntary regulations on an industry characterized by thousands of small firms, found itself virtually ineffective. Recognizing its failures, the CTI, under the leadership of George Sloan, began to aggressively push for government regulation of the industry. The election of Franklin D. Roosevelt and his promised "New Deal" found enthusiastic supporters in the CTI.²⁷

²⁴ Winfield Gaylord, "Here's Truth About Textile Stretch-out," *The Textile Labor Banner*, December 17, 1934, 6. Gaylord's article can be found in box 295, Over-sized Labor Periodicals, Southern Labor Archives, Georgia State University Library, Georgia State University, Atlanta, Georgia.

²⁵ Interview with Mr. Quattlebaum (comp) and Annie Griggs, July 23, 1990, Series II: Interviews, Subseries B: Transcripts, Box 5, Interview 28, Uprising of '34 Collection, Southern Labor Archives, Georgia State University Library, Georgia State University, Atlanta, Georgia.

²⁶ Irons, *Testing the New Deal*, 7-9; "Interviews with Organizers and Workers at ACTW Union Hall"; Hall, et al., *Like a Family*, 294. Hall and her co-authors point out that majority of the grievances expressed in the letters to FDR and the NRA dealt with the stretch-out.

²⁷ Hodges, *New Deal Labor Policy and the Southern Cotton Textile Industry*, 47-49; Irons, *Testing the New Deal*, 55-56; John A. Salmond, *The General Textile Strike of 1934: From Maine to Alabama* (Columbia, Missouri: University of Missouri Press, 2002), 6-7.

The relationship of the new president with the local elites was unique. After 1924, Roosevelt spent a great deal of his time in Warm Springs, a small town near Columbus. In fact, he spent nearly two-thirds of his personal wealth renovating a local resort to help with his rehabilitation from polio. He bought a small farm in the area and developed a close relationship with his neighbors as well as many local and state elites. Due to this popularity, Roosevelt was, on numerous instances, urged to run for governor. Following his election as president in 1932, these relationships took on a new level of importance and would thus shape his relationship to the area. This was further intensified by the one-party nature of southern politics that made regional elites his core constituency. Such support was, however, not absolute, as many Columbus mill owners deeply despised him for his reform efforts. An old joke often told in the city was "that the dream of the mill owners...was to go into the Ralston Hotel and find Franklin Roosevelt dead in every room."²⁸

In June 1933, the National Industrial Relations Act passed through Congress with the backing of Roosevelt, leading to the creation of the National Recovery Administration (NRA). The NRA mandated the writing of "codes" for the various major industries as a means of promoting recovery. The codes would include a regulation of production, hours, and wages. In addition, at the insistence of Senator Robert Wagner (D-NY), each code included a vaguely worded clause, Section 7a, granting workers the legal right to organize labor unions. Another section in the textile code would reduce the intensity of the stretch-out by mandating that workloads not be increased after July 1, 1933. It called for the NRA to establish a three-person committee to specifically address the stretch-out issue. It formed under the leadership of economist Robert Bruere.²⁹ The Roosevelt Administration soon morphed the CTI, under whose auspices the code was written, into the Code Authority, the unelected body whose job it was to implement the new reforms. With the CTI, a veritable bosses' union, in charge of enforcement, the chance for a fair treatment of the concerns of textile workers and their

²⁸ Interview Tape A114, December 29, 1991, Series II: Interviews, Subseries B: Transcripts, Box 4, Uprising of '34 Collection, Southern Labor Archives, Georgia State University Library, Georgia State University, Atlanta, Georgia (referred to hereafter as "Interview Tape A114"); Allen, *The Governor and the Strike*, 93-98; Irons, *Testing the New Deal*, 142-144.

²⁹ Hodges, *New Deal Labor Policy and the Southern Cotton Textile Industry*, 43-46 and 64; Irons, *Testing the New Deal*, 58-60.

unions seemed remote. The three-member stretch-out committee, or Bruere Board, quickly became notorious for favoring the mill owners.³⁰

Despite the administration and industry leaders' maneuvering, mill owners regularly violated the law. Black workers disproportionately bore the brunt. Though the industry code contained no racial language, wage differentials between "skilled" and "unskilled" workers further eroded black workers' position. One Columbus worker wrote, "This plant is falsely classifying negroes working at machines as cleaners and paying less than the Code provides."³¹ Some black workers referred to the NRA as the "Negro removal act" or "Negro rarely allowed" because it increased the vulnerability of their jobs to white replacements. Sociologist Arthur Raper observed in 1934 that this fear among black workers was justified. He wrote, "The present situation of the Negro is not unlike that of an injured and scared man walking in the dark, who, regardless of what he hears, assumes with conviction that it is something that will do him further harm." While highlighting the new burdens it created for black workers, by June 1934 Raper could write that they did experience tangible benefits with the enactment of the NRA.³²

Despite Roosevelt's shortcomings, he enjoyed massive popularity. Like workers throughout the nation, southern textile workers generally viewed Roosevelt as "their" candidate. Despite skepticism about the NRA, this notion did not generally change for black workers, as Roosevelt avoided the issue of race.³³ One black Columbus worker later recalled that Roosevelt "brought about a big change. I was so glad."³⁴ The new reforms led many workers to feel that it was their patriotic duty not only to join a union but also to ensure the proper implementation of their industry code. Labor organizers concluded that, "Section 7(a) was the legal foundation of a new labor movement."³⁵

³⁰ Irons, *Testing the New Deal*, 58-62; Hodges, *New Deal Labor Policy and the Southern Cotton Textile Industry*, 48-49 and 71-73.

³¹ "Interview Tape A114."

³² Raper, "The Southern Negro and the NRA," 132-134 and 138-140.

³³ Raper, "The Southern Negro and the NRA," 132-134 and 138-140; Allen, *The Governor and the Strike*, 73; Brattain, *The Politics of Whiteness*, 51-52.

³⁴ "Interview with Cleveland Walton and Richard Allen."

³⁵ Hodges, *New Deal Labor Policy and the Southern Cotton Textile Industry*, 60-61.

The authors of *Like a Family* suggest that the "iconography of the Blue Eagle [NRA] evoked notions of political and industrial democracy."³⁶ Indeed, at the height of the 1934 strike, local union leader E.B. Newberry argued, "It is my honest opinion that if section 7 (a)...was lived up to by the mill management, this national strike would have been avoided."³⁷

In his immensely popular "fireside chats," Roosevelt encouraged workers to write him and NRA chief Hugh Johnson to tell them how the new reforms were being implemented in their localities. While political letter writing had traditionally been the domain of the urban middle class and educated elites, thousands of letters from textile workers poured into Washington. In the social and political climate of the South of the day, letter writing was a particularly bold act of political activism. Many workers, fearful of losing their jobs, declined to sign their letters, writing instead, "If you investigate this, please don't use my name as we are afraid of losing our jobs. All the people here is afraid to speak up for themselves, afraid of losin' their jobs."³⁸ Instead of addressing individual concerns, the letters took on a collective nature, speaking to the needs of a particular group of workers. One group of Columbus workers signed their letter to FDR, "A Committee of Half-Starved Human Beings Looking to You for Help."³⁹ Many of the letters from white workers did not, however, address the issue of race in the industry. Those that did generally referred to black workers with much of the same language that skilled workers used in reference to "unskilled" workers.⁴⁰

The outbreak of the general strike in the fall of 1934 came on the heels of a complete failure, in the eyes of many textile workers, of the NRA to positively affect their lives. Only a few "unskilled" workers benefited from the NRA. Most workers saw negligible, negative, or no benefits. The CTI-dominated Code Authority, as expected, paid little attention to the concerns of ordinary workers.

³⁶ Hall et al., *Like a Family*, 310.

³⁷ *Columbus Ledger*, September 9, 1934.

³⁸ Hall, et al., *Like a Family*, 309; William F. Danaher and Vincent J. Roscigno, *The Voice of Southern Labor: Radio, Music, and Textile Strikes, 1929-1934* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2004), 103; "Interviews with Organizers and Workers at ACTW Union Hall." Please note that the letters are being read by the interviewee from transcripts supplied to them by the interviewer, and all other letters cited from interview transcripts are also from the interviewee.

³⁹ "Interviews with Organizers and Workers at ACTW Union Hall."

⁴⁰ Hall et al., *Like a Family*, 317-319.

Demonstrating their bias, between August 8, 1933, and August 8, 1934, only ninety-six of the 3,290 code violations reported to the Bruere Board had even been investigated, with only one decided in favor of the complainant.⁴¹ Theodore Forbes, former executive vice president of the main textile trade group in Georgia, later admitted that his group "had no intention of abiding by the code."⁴² Several months before the general strike began, one Columbus worker wrote to FDR,

I am writing you in regard to the mill here. I do not know whether or not you will be interested in our conditions or not, but I believe you will stand by us all. The American Spinnin' Company went out on strike Monday, February 11, 1934...[The people on strike] are all for the right thing and are only askin' for the right things. This mill still has a stretchout system. Instead of putting more people to work, they're laying them off and are workin' the people to death and are not going by your codes at all...[The bosses are] treating the people worse than convicts.⁴³

A group of black workers wrote that while the implementation of the stretch-out system worsened the conditions of all workers in the mill, their racial position made their suffering more acute. They wrote,

The factory recently put in new machinery, which, of course, reduced the number of men...We feel that this was unfair as whites were taken from other jobs and put on colored jobs. We would appreciate it if you would send NRA authorities to settle this debate.⁴⁴

Unionization represented both a response to the crisis and an endorsement of federal efforts. In 1929, the state of Georgia had only one existing textile union, and it was functioning with an illegal, underground status. Columbus textile workers, however, had a strong tradition of organization, and by 1930, the city had become a UTW stronghold. Columbus, like many other textile towns, experienced sporadic worker actions throughout the months leading up to the general strike.⁴⁵ The strike and the militancy it brought significantly challenged traditional notions about the backwardness and impotence of the southern working class. Southern textile owners advertised the region as a source of cheap, docile labor. Even the former president of the American Federation of Labor, Samuel Gompers, argued that Southern workers were inherently inferior, that they were

⁴¹Hall et al., *Like a Family*, 325; Irons, *Testing the New Deal*, 66-67 and 72-73.

⁴² Allen, *The Governor and the Strike*, 65.

⁴³ "Interviews with Organizers and Workers at ACTW Union Hall."

⁴⁴ Ibid.

⁴⁵ Irons, *Testing the New Deal*, 32, 70, and 115; "Interviews with Organizers and Workers at ACTW Union Hall"; *Columbus Enquirer*, June 22, July 24, and August 15 and 16, 1934.

"chinesising [sic] our people, our institutions, and our civilization." It was these same workers, however, that organized themselves and forced their union to launch the strike. The UTW expanded rapidly in 1933 and 1934, and, because of its limited staff and resources, the general strike, especially in the South, took on the character of a grassroots rebellion.⁴⁶

The "uprising" that followed the Sanders murder helped give the local movement focus, pushing workers towards a general strike. Workers at the largest mill in the city, the Eagle and Phenix, voted on August 8 to strike. Local union leaders urged the workers to reconsider, and at a mass meeting on August 15, 2,200 workers voted fifteen to one to strike. By August 17, the mill was almost completely shut down.⁴⁷ After a little more than a fortnight, on September 4, an estimated ninety-five percent of the city's 12,000 workers were on strike. Mass picketing forced the other mills to close. Indicative of the strength of the strike, according to a union statement published in the *Columbus Ledger*, on the second day of mass picketing workers forced the resignation of "several of the special deputies employed by the company." The statement continued: "The strikers cheered the deputies when they gave up their guns." After just two days the employers announced that they would not attempt to reopen the mills, and, as a result, picketing ceased.⁴⁸ On 6 September, a journalist for the newspaper wrote, "A Sunday-like appearance prevailed at the cotton mills today as picket lines were absent and the mills remained idle."⁴⁹

Despite the prominent role the KKK played in the Sanders funeral, the organization was not active during the strike, demonstrating neither support nor opposition. Local historian Bill Winn commented that the KKK used to be "a force to be reckoned with [in Columbus]. Not only, in the society at large, but in politics and in getting jobs and keeping jobs." He noted, however, that the organization "was violently anti-union" and, for a time, maintained its meeting place inside the

⁴⁶ Brattain, *Politics of Whiteness*, 18 and 44-46; *New York Times*, August 14, 1934; Irons, *Testing the New Deal*, 40-41, 69, 102-103, 118-119, and 122; Hodges, *New Deal Labor Policy and the Southern Cotton Textile Industry*, 34-37.

⁴⁷ *Columbus Ledger*, August 16 and 17, 1934; *Columbus Enquirer*, August 16, 1934.

⁴⁸ *Columbus Ledger*, September 4 and 5, 1934.

⁴⁹ *Columbus Ledger*, September 6, 1934.

headquarters of the Columbus Police Department.⁵⁰ Two black Columbus workers later recalled that the KKK operated in the area unhindered. The two workers recalled a 1931 incident when the KKK caught a black man named Matt "messing around with a white woman." The group murdered the man, his sister, and his mother. The organization regularly engaged in actions aimed at intimidating black workers. While one of the workers stated that he could not be sure as to whether or not there were KKK members in the mills, he always assumed there were. He said that it would have been difficult to know for sure because they hid their identity.⁵¹

Discussing the lack of black worker participation in the 1934 strike, a textile worker from Knoxville, Tennessee, later recalled, "It—it never crossed our mind because we were livin' in a...segregated society and that was all we had. All I'd ever known was you were segregated."⁵² While her comments reflected the situation several hundred miles away, white workers in Columbus likely shared these sentiments. Commenting on race relations within the mill, local worker Richard Allen recalled, "I didn't mess around with them [white workers]." He said that he "knew how they was." He went on to explain that segregation in the mills was complete. Black workers only had access to one bathroom in the expansive mills, while multiple bathrooms were available to white workers. They also had to eat their meals separate from the white workers, and, at one of the local mills, were compelled to walk over a quarter of a mile around the building in order to enter and leave through the back door.⁵³ Even mill housing was largely segregated.⁵⁴

The segregation of the mills extended into the local textile union. Though the UTW set up a number of all-black locals in the region, there is no evidence of this in Columbus in 1934. Black

⁵⁰ "Bill Winn's Tour of Columbus, Georgia."

⁵¹ "Interview with Cleveland Walton and Richard Allen." The two workers do not comment on whether or not charges were brought against men who murdered "Matt," but based on earlier statements it is implied that no charges were filed.

⁵² "Interviews with Organizers and Workers at ACTW Union Hall." She goes on to state that while she cannot remember any black workers even working in her mill, she says that even if there had been workers involved in the strike that she didn't think that the workers could take on the political issue of segregation as well as the economic demands of the strike.

⁵³ "Interview with Cleveland Walton and Richard Allen."

⁵⁴ "Interviews with Organizers and Workers at ACTW Union Hall."

workers were only asked to join the union during the strike, but not in an active capacity.⁵⁵ Atlanta-based UTW organizer and lawyer Joe Jacobs concluded that they were asked by the union leadership to stay out of the strike for their own protection, not as a means of furthering racism and segregation. He said that union leaders even went to local black leaders to plead with them to convince black workers to stay away from the picket lines. Supporting this decision, Jacobs argued,

If there was any kind of problem...the blacks would not be bearing the brunt of it, because if there was someone killed, if there was someone hurt and a black was near there who was on strike, he would be the first one that they would lock up...after the union leaders. That's who they'd lock up first.⁵⁶

While Jacobs doubtlessly had a strong case, considering local conditions, the decision indicated that the strike would leave the racial divisions within the textile working class intact and unchallenged. Despite Jacobs' claims, a journalist working for the UTW weekly newspaper, the *Textile Labor Banner*, praised the strength of southern workers in the December 17, 1934, issue: "in the South...there is a basic unity to begin with, of race, language and social forms."⁵⁷

Unionization did help to drive a wedge between white workers and their bosses, but the class system recognized by the white workers did not transcend racial boundaries. The class antagonism between the workers and their bosses was one thing, but it did not significantly undermine the sort of united front that existed against those who fell outside of this system, namely non-whites. Unions were traditionally lacking in the South, leading historian Michelle Brattain to argue that the absence of unions contributed to the idea of a "common white interest."⁵⁸ Observing southern mills in the mid-1920s, sociologist Margorie Potwin suggested that white workers, building on a perceived drop in social status, brought "an old racial antipathy" into the mills. She argued, "The inferiority complex of the whites submerged by their own race, took itself out on the blacks by an assumed attitude of

⁵⁵ Irons, *Testing the New Deal*, 71; *Columbus Enquirer*, September 2, 1934; "Interview with Cleveland Walton and Richard Allen." Allen states that he did join the UTW in 1934.

⁵⁶ "Interviews with Organizers and Workers at ACTW Union Hall Interview."

⁵⁷ "Textile Workers Now Know to Stand United." *The Textile Labor Banner*, December 17, 1934. The article is located in box 295, Over-sized Labor Periodicals, Southern Labor Archives, Georgia State University Library, Georgia State University, Atlanta, Georgia.

⁵⁸ Brattain, *The Politics of Whiteness*, 9 and 17.

aggressive superiority."⁵⁹ White textile workers, or "lintheads," as they were sometimes derisively called, may have viewed their bosses with contempt, but this did not necessarily translate into a class-consciousness distinct from racial consciousness.⁶⁰

Religion also played an important role in the workers' culture and strike efforts. The day before Labor Day 1934, the official start of the strike, Reverend Pierce Harris delivered a special sermon, "Building the World by a Carpenter's Plan," on the lawn of the local courthouse. With the endorsement of local religious and labor leaders, the service attracted a crowd of 4,000. Despite its timing, Harris, defiantly acknowledging that local elites had warned him against speaking about the impending strike, did not explicitly discuss the upcoming confrontation. He did, however, condemn the mill owners for the request, denouncing the stretch-out as "the disturbing element in American industrial life." He argued for industrial peace. He said that bosses and workers alike have responsibilities to meet, and that if they met them there would be no conflict. Furthering this point, he explained that he viewed no classes in society, only religious and non-religious people. With Jesus Christ, he explained, "there are no classes, no servant and master, king or subject – we are all simply laborers with the Divine architect in the building of a better world."⁶¹ During the Labor Day celebration at the county fair grounds the following day, George Googe, the Southern representative of the American Federation of Labor, said that Harris' sermon embodied the principles for which the labor movement stood. Union leaders also, though unsuccessfully, sought to work with Harris to set up a series of religious revival meetings for textile workers during the strike.⁶²

⁵⁹ Potwin, *Cotton Mill People of the Piedmont*, 58-61. Potwin argues that as white workers adjusted to mill life and as "the blacks proved themselves law-abiding and inoffensive" racial tensions "died away." On pages 60 and 61, she further elaborates on the absence of racial tensions by providing an expanded analysis of the type of interactions she witnessed. The race relations she describes, however, paint a picture more akin to conditions of slavery in southern mythology with benevolent, paternalistic white workers interacting with their child-like, black counterparts.

⁶⁰ For a discussion of the drop in social status for textile workers and the way that they perceived themselves and were perceived and treated by other citizens, "Interviews with Organizers and Workers at ACTW Union Hall. One woman worker whose parents were also mill workers recalled, "In my particular family we'd say, 'Well, we aren't like the rest of the people at the mill.'" She later stated that she was "an old adult" before she stopped being embarrassed to tell people that she was a textile worker. It should also be noted that she was a worker being interviewed in a union building about a strike, so she would likely be more prone to reject her shame than other workers.

⁶¹ *Columbus Enquirer*, August 31 and September 1 and 3, 1934.

⁶² *Columbus Enquirer* September 4, 8, and 9, 1934. The September 9 article simply stated that the revival series for textile workers was called off after "an agreement could not be reached in regard to the fundamental details of the program."

While Harris's sermon doubtlessly represented a liberal religious celebration of the labor movement, mention of black workers was wholly absent. That black workers were excluded from the strike and from society at large was understood and accepted as natural, and thus not an issue worth discussing.⁶³ Harris's sermon did not challenge such assumptions. Like the workers he spoke to that evening, he operated within the dominant racial framework.

The strength of the UTW in Columbus led to a shutdown of all local mills within a matter of days. Workers closed the mills through mass picketing, persuading many local mill owners to not even attempt to open their gates. The strength of the labor movement in Columbus presented the striking workers with an enormous amount of social pressure with which to press their interests. Social pressure was not, however, the only means in which the mills were made idle, especially in the first days of the strike. Charles Thompson, a non-union local striker, was convicted for assault after witnesses testified that he had threatened and threw a bottle at the head of a worker attempting to cross the picket line. While physical confrontation after the Sanders murder was limited, a reporter from the *Columbus Ledger* reported on the first day of the strike that there had been "some jeering and a few instances of chasing of workers and a few fist fights." Conditions of relative calm prevailed until Governor Eugene Talmadge declared martial law and sent National Guardsmen to force the mills open. A Georgia mill owner later recalled, "Talmadge is the best Governor this state ever had; he broke the strike for us."⁶⁴

The same day that troops poured into Columbus in an effort to force the local mills open, National Guardsmen averted a possible violent attack on black workers returning from work. The *Columbus Enquirer* reported that two men were arrested when the National Guard learned "that a large group of strikers and sympathizers was gathering...and that they planned to molest a number

⁶³ *Columbus Enquirer* September 3, 1934; Roediger, *The Wages of Whiteness*, 6. Roediger quotes Coco Fosco as pointing out that "racial identities are not only Black, Latino, Asian, Native American and so on; they are also white. To ignore white ethnicity is to redouble its hegemony by naturalizing it."

⁶⁴ *Columbus Enquirer* September 4, 6, 7, 16, and 17 and October 5, 1934; Irons, *Testing the New Deal*, 135-137; Salmond, *The General Textile Strike of 1934*, 182; Allen, *The Governor and the Strike*, 3-4, 101-106, 115-118, 122-123, and 125-126. While governors in the other southern textile states called out troops on the first few days of the strike, Talmadge waited nearly two weeks. He was running in a close Democratic primary, and routinely promised his working class constituents that he would not call out troops against them. He accepted substantial bribes from leading mill owners, and, on the eve of his electoral victory, called out the National Guard and declared martial law in the largest peacetime mobilization in Georgia history.

of negro employes [sic] of the mill who went to work yesterday morning and had to return to their homes...yesterday [17 September] afternoon." The neighborhood was already under patrol by the troops. While little was written about the planned attack, the *Columbus Ledger* reported that the two men were arrested when they were seen signaling to the workers after troops attempted to disperse the crowd. Headlines like, "Two Placed Under Arrest as Guardsmen Start Drive Against Forming of Crowds," mentioned nothing of the racial nature of the incident, and demonstrated the lack of local outrage. The headline in the *Columbus Ledger* simply read, "Men are Sent to Local Jail."⁶⁵ Like Harris' sermon, the absence of outrage seems to convey that the ideology of apartheid had been internalized and did not need to be mentioned. No outrage was expressed because there likely was none.

The strike in Columbus ended unceremoniously with the city and its mills under virtual military occupation. While public meetings were banned, peaceful assemblies of workers led by union leaders were allowed. The ban was meant to discourage picketing, violence against strikebreakers, and the formation of "flying squadrons," in which workers went en masse to call workers in neighboring cities out on strike.⁶⁶ Local strike leaders, along with their counterparts throughout the state, were kidnapped and held incommunicado until the strike was over.⁶⁷ Workers did not, however, immediately return to work. Many strikebreakers were taken to the mills by train to avoid the picket lines. While not necessarily apparent at the time, the strike ended in complete defeat after the union leadership agreed to a series of proposals put forth by a special board set up by Roosevelt. The *New York Times* estimated that 72,000 workers were not rehired after the strike, and in Georgia, at least in one instance, National Guardsmen actively prevented union members from returning to

⁶⁵ *Columbus Ledger*, September 18 and 19, 1934. One white worker was indicted on four misdemeanor counts for taunting and threatening another white worker conducting a poll on behalf of a mill owner to see how many workers wanted to end the strike. Violence or threatened violence was not specifically geared towards black workers, but as compared to the above-mentioned instance, this case involved one worker against another while the other took on a group characteristic.

⁶⁶ *Columbus Enquirer* September 20, 22, and 23, 1934; James H. Creek, "Labor Strikes in the Columbus Textile Mills During the Summer of 1934," May 31, 1984, Columbus College School of Education Specialist Project Report, Columbus State University Archives, Columbus, Georgia.

⁶⁷ Allen, *The Governor and the Strike*, 128.

work.⁶⁸ The situation was best captured by headlines in the *Columbus Enquirer*, like "Many Get Jobs as Mills Open in Columbus," which implied that workers were being rehired and not simply returning to their old jobs. Between 2,500 and 3,500 textile workers out of a total of 11,500 in Columbus were not rehired after the strike. Local UTW leader E.B. Newberry complained that the union had to file 971 cases of discrimination against union members on the first day that the mills reopened. He later charged the mill owners with "wholesale discrimination."⁶⁹ With the rehiring of the entire workforce, black workers, prevented from actively participating in the strike, may have been in a better position. There is, however, no evidence that black workers were used as strikebreakers during this strike, though they were often used in this capacity around the South.⁷⁰

The defeat of the strike in Georgia, particularly in Columbus, was largely the result of the intervention of the National Guard.⁷¹ While the strength of the Columbus workers was an anomaly in the region, granting them a degree of public backing unheard of in other areas, workers stood to lose a great deal in the event of a defeat. Barely a year after the strike, there was little union activity in the city. Local union leader Lloyd Davis said that UTW activity "died out, although we had a lot of union people there, a lot of union people." The defeat of the strike through direct military intervention, along with the draconian mass firings that followed, helped create a legacy of fear. Almost sixty years after its defeat, workers continued to express reluctance and suspicion when asked about their role in the strike.⁷²

⁶⁸ Interview with Eulis Pippin, February 16, 1988, Folder 9, Box 7, Mill Worker Oral History Program, Columbus State University Archives, Columbus, Georgia; Irons, *Testing the New Deal*, 151-155; Hall et al., *Like a Family*, 350.

⁶⁹ *Columbus Enquirer*, September 23, 25 and 26, 1934. The September 25 headline in the *Enquirer*, "Many Get Jobs as Mills Open in Columbus," should be contrasted with a headline from the two days before that read, "Strike Ends and Workers Will Go Back to Jobs." While the first article implies that the workers are returning to their old jobs after the end of the strike, the second article approaches the issue from the standpoint that the workers are applying for and hoping to get new jobs.

⁷⁰ Creek, "Labor Strikes in the Columbus Textile Mills During the Summer of 1934," 11-12.

⁷¹ Allen, *The Governor and the Strike*, 125-126.

⁷² "Interviews with Organizers and Workers at ACTW Union Hall"; Irons, *Testing the New Deal*, 70, 161-3. Irons commented that the "'Union' was not a function of a membership card or of payment of dues, or even attending meetings, it was a state of heart and mind." She also pointed out that the defeat of the union did not necessarily entail a defeat in grassroots working class activism. More strikes took place in 1935 than in any year since 1921 and increased every year until 1938.

While Janet Irons argues that the stretch-out is an "enduring legacy" of the strike, another such "legacy" is the institutional and ideological dominance of whiteness, left unchallenged by the uprising.⁷³ The strike failed to combat the issue of racism, and, in the case of Columbus, embraced a working class identity rooted in whiteness. The dual racial and class-consciousness of the textile workers did not present itself as contradictory. In fact, the two identities were viewed as quite compatible and almost natural, given the formation of the local working class. Though black workers later entered the mills in larger numbers, racism remained a problem for decades to come. White workers' racism does not mean, however, that mill owners did not consciously use it to undermine collective action. Local historian Bill Winn observes,

One of the reasons that the labor movement has had so much difficulty in Columbus over the years, is the threat that mill owners would bring in black operatives to take the place of striking workers, or for that matter, of workers who protested working conditions at all. So it has been a two edged sword here for the mill owners. On the one hand, they could use the threat of bringing in black operatives to suppress any union movements among whites in the mills; and at the same time, they could use this, the anti black [sic] feeling among the white people here, and the prejudice and resentment, to foment discord between the blacks and the white workers, and thus keep control of both.⁷⁴

One worker reported that as recently as 1991, mill owners in Columbus sought to undermine an organizing drive by telling white workers that if they voted for the union there would be "black people all over you."⁷⁵

Through the nature of industrial development in Columbus, as with much of the region, racial identity became intertwined with working class identity in the textile industry.⁷⁶ While the mill owners actively encouraged this racial identity, its ideological hegemony translated into official segregation in the workers' independent organizations and into support, both actively and passively, for racial violence. The exclusion of black workers from the strike and their de facto exclusion from the union did not necessarily translate into hostility towards unions, but it doubtlessly encouraged many not to

⁷³ Irons, *Testing the New Deal*, 173.

⁷⁴ "Bill Winn's Tour of Columbus."

⁷⁵ "Interviews with Organizers and Workers at ACTW Union Hall."

⁷⁶ "Bill Winn's Tour of Columbus, Georgia"; Brattain, *The Politics of Whiteness*, 19 and 47.

resist the call to return to work. It also shaped the role that the strike played in the history of the local working class.⁷⁷

The strike in Columbus and throughout the region was a grassroots uprising of textile workers who formed part of an overwhelmingly white working class. That the strike did not generally challenge the ideological or institutional underpinnings of racial apartheid does not lead to a dismissal of the historic significance of the strike. The authors of *Like a Family* argue, "The General Strike, whatever else it may have been, was a moment in history that laid bare longings and antagonisms ordinarily silenced, distorted, or repressed." The same authors further argue that the southern workers' "militancy sprang in part from a defense of traditional values and in part from a desire to exert control over their changing place in a new, more expansive world – and it must be understood on its own terms and in its own historical moment."⁷⁸ All things considered, Atlanta-based organizer Joe Jacobs could still argue with merit,

It was on Labor Day in 1934 that I witnessed the closest thing that this country has had to a revolution. The General Textile Strike was one of the largest strikes in American history; it was the culmination of homegrown organizing and protest. For many southern workers it was the first time they had raised their voices as citizens to challenge the control of mill owners.⁷⁹

⁷⁷ Interview with Cleveland Walton, July 23, 1990, Series II: Interviews, Subseries B: Transcripts, Box 5, Interview 23, Uprising of '34 Collection, Southern Labor Archives, Georgia State University Library, Georgia State University, Atlanta, Georgia.

⁷⁸ Hall et al., *Like a Family*, 353.

⁷⁹ Quoted in Danaher and Roscigno, *The Voice of Southern Labor*, xv.

A Genealogical Survey of the John Mel Cutliff Family

Introduced and Transcribed

by

Eric McRoberts

The following transcription is a genealogical survey of the Cutliff family—specifically that of John Mel Cutliff of Putnam County, Georgia. The information was apparently recorded in a family Bible and details the Cutliff family ancestors, beginning with the Griffin's and Ragan's. This survey was transcribed from handwritten notes located in the Francis Orray Ticknor Collection in the Columbus State University Archives, Columbus, Georgia.

John Mel Cutliff was born in Putnam County, Georgia, on September 14, 1823, to John and Lucinda (Ragan) Cutliff. Cutliff received his early education at the "The Old Field School" (later Mercer University) in Lincoln County. He enrolled at the University of Georgia in 1841, remaining there until his junior year. After his stint at the University of Georgia, Cutliff studied law under Linton A. Stephens and General Lucius Gartrell in the early 1840's. After his marriage to Mary S. Jones in 1846, Cutliff moved to Baker County, where he would prosper as a planter and slaveholder. In 1856, Cutliff became a member of the Albany Guards. He served in the Confederate Army during the Civil War before a serious illness forced his return home. He continued to support the Confederate war effort by supplying mules and foodstuffs to the military. In 1863, Cutliff purchased a home at 319 Society Street, Albany, Georgia. He resided there until his death on July 1, 1907.¹

¹ Additional information for John M. Cutliff is available at http://dlg.galileo.usg.edu/centennialcatalog/html/CUTLIFF_John_M_page1.html (accessed on May 28, 2009); http://www.usgennet.org/usa/ga/county/dougherty/101200DoughertyCoHistory_w.pdf; <http://www.rootsweb.ancestry.com/~galincol/census/1850/1850cd.htm> (accessed on May 27, 2009); http://books.google.com/books?id=xUUTAAAAYAAJ&pg=PA39&lpg=PA39&dq=john+m.+cutliff&source=bl&ots=ps5Bm5EoIt&sig=V2rAe6KE4Rub4Y9RIUKhZr1w9bY&hl=en&ei=D4MdSt7wFwAe8lei9Bg&sa=X&oi=book_result&ct=result&resnum=5 (accessed on May 28, 2009); <http://freepages.genealogy.rootsweb.ancestry.com/~corbaumgen/Baumann/gp3750.htm> (accessed on May 28, 2009).

Family Bible of Grandmother Ragan to John M. Cutliff

Family Record

Births:

Sons and Daughters of John and Elizabeth Griffin:

1. Joseph, born June 11 – 1770;
2. Polly, born Mar 25 – 1772;
3. Jeremiah, born Mar 14 -1774;
4. Elizabeth, born April 27 – 1776;
5. Sarah, born Sept 18 – 1778;
6. John, born Feb 18 – 1781;

Births of Daughters of Nathaniel and Elizabeth Ragan:

1. Rebecca born Dec. 3 – 1785;
2. Jane born June 16 – 1787;
3. Cynthia born January 6 – 1790;
4. Nancy born June 21 – 1792;
5. Lucinda born January 28 – 1795;

John Mel Cutliff was born Sept. 14 – 1823

Mary S. (Jones) Cutliff was born Dec. 18 1828

Sons and Daughters of John M. and Mary S. Cutliff:

1. Susan Jane Cutliff born Jan. 9 – 1848
2. William Emory born Sept. 4 – 1849
3. Ragan James born April 6 – 1852
4. Joseph Holliday born July 7 – 1854
5. Mary born July 4 – 1856
6. Ellen Hanson born June 25 – 1858
7. Edwin Augustus born June 15 – 1860
8. Johnnie born Feb 26 – 1862
9. May Von born May 30 – 1863
10. Amelia Evangeline born July 29 – 1866
11. Jerry Griffin born April 25 – 1869
12. Maria born _____

Sons and Daughters of Susan Jane Cutliff and Moody Burt Meriwether, M.D.

1. Joseph Cutliff born and died
2. Rosa Burt born June 14 – 1873
3. William Gordon born Feb. 21 – 1875

Birth of the Daughters of May V. Cutliff and Michael Ticknor

1. Michelle Cutliff ---- born Dec. 30, 1887

Son of Jerry Griffin and Caroline Turner Cutliff:

1. John Milton Cutliff born July 18 – 1894

Sons and Daughters of Rosa Burt Meriwether and Washington O'Kelley:

1. --- W. Jr. born Nov. 15- 1902
2. Mary Cutliff born Mar 8 - 1905
3. William Meriwether born Oct. 3 - 1911

Sons and Daughters of Gordon and Hattie Belle Wynn Meriwether:

1. William Gordon b. Aug 1905
2. John Cutliff born Sept. 7 - 1913

Son and Daughter of Michelle C. Ticknor and Meriwether Furlow:

1. Michelle Ticknor Furlow b. May 9 - 1915
2. Meriwether Furlow b. Feb. 13 - 1917

Daughters of John Milton and Ruth Cherry Cutliff:

1. Margaret Bain Cutliff born June 23 - 1922
2. Mary Emily Cutliff born Oct 25- 1929

Son and Daughter of W. O'Kelley and Dorothy Smith O'Kelley:

1. Dorothy Anne b. Mar 21 - 1928
2. Thos. W. Jr. b. July 1938

Daughter of John Cutliff and Smogene Powell Meriwether:

1. Harriette Jean b. May 23 - 1937

Daughter of Mary O'Kelley and Arthur B. Peacock, M.D.

1. Marilyn Meriwether b. April 27 - 1939

Marriages:

Lucinda Ragan married 1st John Cutliff Jan. 6 - 1815; married 2nd prior to 1826, Dickerson Holliday; married 3rd Jamison Mabrey.

John M. Cutliff married to Mary S. Jones, Columbia Co. Ga Dec. 17 - 1846.

Susan Jane Cutliff married in Albany, Ga. To Moody Burt Meriwether, M.D. Mar 6 - 1871.

May Von Cutliff married Dec. 29 - 1886 to Thomas Michelle Ticknor

Jerri Griffin Cutliff married to Caroline Turner, Nov. 23 - 1892, Gainesville, Fla.

Ragan James Cutliff married to Pauline Seiz Oct 3 - 1895, St. Sanis MO.

Joseph Holliday Cutliff married to Johnnie Siles, June 14 - 1905, Union Springs Ala.

Rosa Burt Meriwether married to Hattie Belle Wynn, Oct. 18 - 1904, Albany Ga.

Michelle Cutliff Ticknor married to Meriwether Furlow July 1 - 1914, Albany Georgia.

John Milton Cutliff married to Ruth Hargrave Cherry April 14 - 1920, Chatham Va.

Thomas M. O'Kelley Jr. married to Dorothy Smith Sept. 3 -1926, Rocky Mt. N.C.

John Cutliff Meriwether married to Smogene Powell of Sanette, Ala – Aug 25 – 136, Tallahassee Fla.

Mary Cutliff O'Kelley married to Arthur Biglome Peacock July 2 – 1937.

Deaths:

Cynthia Ragan died in May 1804;

Nathaniel Ragan departed this life Sept 21 – 1831;

Elizabeth Ragan departed this life in 1841 – (Aug 13 – 90 years, 10 mos, 26 days)

Jeremiah Griffin departed this life Sept. 7 – 1847 – His pistol went off and shot him through his thigh on way home from Mississippi.

Lucinda Mabry died April 1 – 1867, Albany Ga.

John Cutliff died July 22 – 1823 (aged 35 years and 15 days, Edington Ga)

John M. Cutliff Entered into Rest July 1st – 1907.

Mary S. Cutliff Entered into Rest Dec. 6 – 1907.

Mary Cutliff died Sept. 25 – 1857, aged one year, two months and twenty one days.

Johnnie Cutliff died July 21 – 1862;

Edwin Augustus Cutliff died Nov. 28 – 1881, of Typhoid Fever

May V. Cutliff Ticknor died April 5 – 1890;

Joseph Holliday Cutliff died Dec. 31 – 1912;

William Emory Cutliff died Jan 28 – 1919;

Ragan James Cutliff died June 8 – 1928;

Thomas Michelle Ticknor died April 5 – 1930;

Ellen (Nella. H.) Cutliff Entered into Rest June 1st 1930, 1st Sunday after Ascension, at 10 a.m.

Marriage Certificate of John Cutliff and Miss Lucinda Ragan

Recorded in the Ordinary's Office Lincoln Co. Ga

I do here certify that I joined together in the Holy State of Matrimony John Cutliff and Miss Lucinda Ragan in the 6th day of January 1815

Tombstone Inscriptions:

"Sacred to the memory of John Cutliff who departed this transitory life in the triumph of the faith on the 22nd of July 1823, aged 35 years and 15 days" – (Born July 7 – 1788)

"Here lies Jane Cutliff,
Eldest daughter of John and Lucinda Cutliff who died the 23 of April 1824 in the sixth year of her age."

"Nathaniel Ragan
Sacred to the memory of Nathaniel Ragan who departed this life on the 21st of September 1831, on the 69th year of his age."

"Elizabeth Ragan
Sacred to the memory of Elizabeth Ragan who departed this life with Christian fortitude on the 13th August 1841, aged 90 years ten months and twenty six days. Oh! Blessed are they who die in the Sand." (she was born about Sept 18 – 1750, daughter of John and Susan Ray.)

"Cynthia Ragan
Sacred to the memory of Cynthia Ragan daughter of Nathaniel and Elizabeth Ragan; born 1790, and died May 1815."

"Dickerson Holliday
Sacred to the memory of Dickerson Holliday who was born on the 7th of December 1782 and departed this life on the 5th of October 1827."

"Rebecca Holliday
Sacred to the memory of Rebecca Holliday, wife of Dickerson Holliday, and the daughter of Nathaniel and Elizabeth Ragan."
She was born 3rd of Dec 1785 and died the 15th of Mar. 1825

"Thomas Hemphill
Sacred to the memory of Thomas Hemphill who was born April 2 – 1774 and departed this life Feb 5 – 1825."

John Melohizedek Cutliff, son of John and Lucinda Cutliff, was born near Eatonton, Putnam Co: Ga on his grandfather's plantation Sept. 14-1823. Married Dec. 17 – 1846 Mary S. Columbia Co. Ga, daughter of Judge William Jones of King and Queen Co. Va., and his 4th wife, Mrs. Elcy Tankersley Pace. Died July 1st 1907, Albany Ga. The children of John M. and Mary S.J. Cutliff – Susan Jane, married Moody Burt Meriwether, and has one daughter and a son. Rosa married W. O'Kelley. 3 children, W. Jr., Mary Cutliff ad Meriwether O'Kelley.

- (1.) William Gordon Meriwether married Hattie Belle. Wynn – 1 son William Gordon Jr.
- (2.) William Emory Cutliff - unmarried -
- (3.) Ragan Jones Cutliff married in St. Sanis MO, to Pauline Seiz.
- (4.) Joseph Holliday Cutliff married at Union Springs Ala. Johnnie Siles (Troy, Ala.).
- (5.) Mary ("Mamie") died in childhood.
- (6.) Edwin Augustus Cutliff died, aged 21.
- (7.) John ("Johnnie") died in infancy.
- (8.) Ellen Hanson ("Nella") Portrait Painter and art teacher in Albany Ga. unmarried.

- (9.) May Von (painted china) married Michael Ticknor, son of F. O. Ticknor and his wife Rosa Nelson of Va. 1 child, a daughter, Michelle Cutliff Ticknor.
- (10.) Amelia Evangeline ("Mela") Cutliff (Paints in oil) unmarried.
- (11.) Jerre ("Jack") Griffin Cutliff, married Carrie Isa Turner, daughter of Chas Turner and his wife Emily Shackelford.
- (12.) Maria Tift Cutliff died in infancy.

Primary Sources: Slave Ads in Columbus Newspapers

by

Gary S. Sprayberry

Researching the institution of slavery can be a daunting task. Outside of a few autobiographical sketches, such as the *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass* and *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl* by Harriet Jacobs, slaves left behind few written records. Most of the documents that do pertain to slavery – bills of sale, plantation journals, tax records – were produced by whites and thus only offer one side of the story. Therefore, researchers are required to “read between the lines” in such documents in order to gain a fuller understanding of the daily lives of slaves.

Some of the best and most plentiful sources available for those researching slavery are newspaper ads. A quick perusal of any antebellum southern newspaper can yield a bounty of clues about the slave experience. Runaway slave ads, for instance, provide physical descriptions and names of particular slaves (and slave owners). Ads for slave-trading establishments can tell us where slaves were bought and sold in a given community, revealing the individuals who profited from the domestic slave trade. Such ads can also tell us plenty about white attitudes toward the institution of slavery.

Below, I have included several examples of slave ads from newspapers in Columbus, Georgia, to illustrate a few of the sources available to anyone researching slavery in Muscogee County. The featured ads were pulled from five different Columbus papers at different points in the antebellum period. All of the newspapers are available in manuscript and/or microfilm form at the Simon Schwob Memorial Library at Columbus State University. I would like to thank Giselle Bratcher and Dalton Royer of the Columbus State University Archives for their assistance in gathering sources for this article.


**OGLETREE & JACKSON,
AUCTION AND COMMISSION
MERCHANTS,
No. 131 Broad St., Columbus, Georgia,**
WILL give prompt attention to the Sale of
 Merchandise, Country Produce, Stock,
 Furniture, Vehicles, Real Estate, &c.
 Having secured a house fitted up expressly for
 the purpose, are prepared to Board and Sell
NEGROES on Commission.
 Liberal advances will be made on Merchandise.
 Administrators and Executors' Sales attended to
 on reasonable terms.
 November 13, 1858. tmh23

Fig. 1. *Columbus Daily Sun*, March 25, 1859

On the eve of the Civil War, there were three main slave-trading firms in the city of Columbus: Harrison & Pitts, Hatcher & McGehee, and Ogletree & Jackson. All three were located along Broad Street in the heart of the city's business district. The domestic (or internal) slave trade was deemed crucial to the antebellum southern economy. Tens of thousands of slaves were purchased in states like Virginia and North Carolina and then transported down to the Deep South, where they were sold at major slave trading centers, such as New Orleans, Natchez, Memphis, and Columbus. Being sold into the Deep South proved traumatic for many slaves, as they were torn from family and friends and sent into unfamiliar circumstances.

Negroes! Negroes!

WE are continually receiving from Virginia and North Carolina a large and well selected stock of **MEN, WOMEN, BOYS and GIRLS**, including Field Hands, House Servants, Mechanics, &c., bought by one of the firm expressly for this market, and our friends may rely on getting Negroes of good character, coming up fully to our representations, as we sell none on commission.



July 23, '58-ly HATCHER & McGEHEE.

Fig. 2. *Columbus Daily Sun*, March 28, 1859

Samuel J. Hatcher and Allen Clements McGehee owned and operated a prominent "slave depot" in downtown Columbus. The firm was located at 63 Broad Street. The "Hatcher and McGehee Negro Book," which is housed in the Columbus State University Archives, records a number of the firm's transactions between 1858 and 1860.

HARRISON & PITTS,
Auction and Commission Merchants
 AND
NEGRO BROKERS,
 59 and 61 Broad St., Columbus, Ga.

WE still continue the above line at our old stand. Thankful for the patronage heretofore so liberally extended us by our friends and the public, we hope by renewed exertions to merit its continuance. No efforts will be spared to give entire satisfaction to those who may confide their business to our care. We will give our personal attention to the sale of REAL ESTATE, NEGROES, MERCHANDISE and PRODUCE. Having Houses fitted up expressly for the purpose we are prepared to board, purchase and sell Negroes on Commission.

Liberal advances will be made as heretofore on Negroes and Merchandise.

Administrators and Executors' Sales attended to on reasonable terms.


A stock of likely NEGROES, of all classes, always kept on hand. **HARRISON & PITTS.**

Columbus, August 31, 1858-19

Fig. 3. Columbus Daily Sun, March 28, 1859

The main Columbus slave market was situated between Tenth Street and Front Avenue. According to traditional accounts, as late as 1898, there was a sign posted at this corner that read: "Negroes Bought, Sold, and Hired Here."

Runaway



ON the 2d May, inst., from my plantation, three miles below Columbus, my negro man, ELIAS, of yellow complexion, about common height, some 140 lbs. weight—and having a scar on the lower portion of one of his ears—I think his right one, is about 60 years of age, and will probably change his name.

Up to a few days before the time of his present leaving, he had been absent for four years—and will now doubtless return to his old quarters, near Lumpkin, Ga.—passing as a free man, as he had free papers before, which were given by some man in Columbus. I will pay a liberal reward for his delivery to me, or any information as to his whereabouts will be thankfully received by me at Columbus, Ga.

JAS. ABERCROMBIE.


May 6, 1859 dlr w2t

~~to~~ Lumpkin Palladium copy 2t and send bill to this office.

Fig. 4. Daily Columbus Ledger, May 11, 1859

A majority of the slave ads posted in Columbus newspapers during the antebellum era dealt with runaways. These ads contain a wealth of information for historians, such as physical descriptions, names, and locales. See Figures 4 – 13 for other examples of runaway ads.

\$100 Reward.



RANAWAY from my Plantation, near Dover, P. O., Russell county, Ala., my boy JOSEPH. He is about 34 years old, 5 ft. 10 inches high, weighs about 180 lbs., dark complected, very high forehead, small, quick eye—when spoken to quick to answer, though slow and silly when interrogated. I think he will probably call his name JEP. I purchased Joe of Judge Renfro of Chattahoochee county. Ga.

I will pay the above reward for sufficient evidence to convict any white man of harboring him, or I will pay \$25 for lodging him in any safe Jail.

ALEXANDER H. ROWELL.

Dover, Ala., Oct. 18, 1858 dlf wtf

Fig. 5. Daily Columbus Ledger, November 12, 1858

Slaves ran away for a number of reasons, including physical abuse, separation from family and friends, and intolerable work and living conditions. A majority of runaways could be classified as "temporary fugitives," meaning that they escaped for a few days or weeks, then returned home on their own accord, tired, hungry, and disconsolate. Other temporary fugitives were captured within days of their escape and returned for the reward money.

Agents at Columbus, Ga.,
URQUHART & CHAPMAN.
J. W. BROOKS.

July 26, 1859 dwtf

White Negro Boy!

RUNAWAY from the subscriber, the 22d inst., is about 14 years old, straght hair, blueish eyes, and has a mole on the right side of his neck, and a scar on the right leg, above the knee from a cut, and will pass for a poor white boy. His legs are spotted. He left without a coat, vest, hat or shoes.

I will give \$25 reward for his delivery, or secured where I can get him. **ELIAS HULL.**

Columbus, Ga., July 26, 1859 wdtf

Adamantine Candles.

10 BOXES just received and for sale by HARRISON & DREWS

Fig. 6. Daily Columbus Ledger, July 28, 1859

Some ads can offer clues about a slave's medical history. The above ad may be describing a condition known as vitiligo, which causes the loss of pigmentation in areas of the skin.

\$100 Reward.

I WILL give \$100 reward for the apprehension and delivery of MARTIN, who is charged with the commission of murder on the 16th of May, 1859, in Talbot county, Ga.

Description.—Martin is a bright mulatto, straight hair, has a down look, quick spoken though dignified for a slave, supposed to have a scar on one of his cheeks, about 20 years old, 5 feet 8 or 9 inches high, and is the property of Jack Brown, of Talbot county, Ga. Address me at Talbotton, Ga.

• MONROE DICKSON.


May 30, 1859 dwtf

Fig. 7. Daily Columbus Ledger, July 4, 1859

This ad points to an alleged crime committed by a slave named Martin. According to the 1848 Georgia slave code, slaves or free blacks guilty of murder, insurrection, rape, or poisoning were, "on conviction, punished with death."

for said county, on the first Monday in June next.
Given under my hand this 13th day of April, 1859.
april 19—5t JOHN JOHNSON, Ordinary.

\$150 Reward!

 RANAWAY from the subscriber on the 12th of March last, a negro fellow named ANDERSON, about 26 years of age, about 5 feet 6 or 7 inches high, and of yellow complexion. Said boy has a wife at one Mr. Shipp's, in Chattahoochee county, Ga., about 18 or 20 miles from Columbus, and I suppose that he may be hiding around in that neighborhood. I will give \$25 reward for the arrest of the boy and his lodgment in jail so that I can get him, and \$125 in addition to any one providing testimony to convict any one who may have supplied him with a pass to get away with.

CALVIN BRYAN,
Tuskegee, Ala.

April 14—dlt wlm


50 NEGROES WANTED!

HAVING made our arrange-

Fig. 8. Daily Columbus Ledger, May 3, 1859

The above ad is a clear example of a slave running away to find a loved one. Many of the slave owners who posted ads in Columbus newspapers resided in different parts of the region. They would post ads in various southern newspapers, hoping to spread a wide enough net to catch their escaped bondsmen and women. Dr. Samuel Cartwright, a prominent Louisiana physician, claimed in the 1850's that fugitive slaves suffered from *Drapetomania*, "the disease causing negroes to run away." Subsequent research has exposed the absurdities inherent in Cartwright's theory.

\$20 Reward.



RUNAWAY from the subscriber on the 30th of April last, a mulatto woman named ROSETTA, aged about 34 years, medium height, and quite fleshy, will weigh probably 160 lbs., has no upper front teeth, hair nearly straight, done up in a twist and fastened with a comb. I recently purchased her of Thos. C. Boykin of Barbour county, Ala. I will give the above reward for her apprehension and necessary expenses. Rosetta is a first rate seamstress.

L. L. COWDERY.
dwtf


Columbus, May 13, 1859

Times and Sun copy.

Fig. 9. *Daily Columbus Ledger*, May 13, 1859

This ad literally points to a runaway slave's particular set of skills.

Stop Mabin !!!



RUNAWAY from my house in Talbot County Georgia, on Flint river, on 25th of December last at night, a man slave by the name of MABIN, about twenty years old, chunky built, a bright mulatto, with grey eyes—hair straight and sandy—a great deal on his head, and rather bushy. He will pass for a white man where he is not known. He was seen the next day in the evening about seven miles from Columbus. If he has not got on a Steam Boat at Columbus, it is most probable he is lurking about James Hand's, above West Point, a half-breed who has his sister for a wife. He has been part of his time my ferryman, and is known by a great many people. Several men in Columbus would know him, if they were to see him. Any person that will apprehend said fellow, and put him in any safe Jail in this State or any other, and send me the Jailor's receipt, shall have a reward of Twenty dollars.

ZACHARIAH BOOTH, sen.

Feb. 8—38—3t

Fig. 10. *Columbus Enquirer*, February 16, 1833

Some ads offer the historian a wealth of information about a particular slave. In the above ad, we learn that Mabin was of mixed ancestry, had family near West Point, Georgia, and had served as his owner's ferryman.

RANAWAY,

FROM my Plantation, three Negro boys, named WALLI, RICHARD and PETER, all lately brought from Charleston and speaking the low country dialect. They are supposed to be making their way back to Carolina. A suitable reward will be paid for their apprehension and lodgment in Jail.

JOHN G. WINTER.

Columbus, April 11.

15 tf

Fig. 11. *Southern Sentinel* (Columbus), April 18, 1850

The three escaped slaves referenced in the above ad were more than likely born on a rice plantation in low country South Carolina. They apparently spoke Gullah, a Creole language that combined elements of English and West African dialects.

STOLEN

FROM the plantation of the subscriber in Gwinnett county, Ga. on the 7th day of March last, a negro woman named PRISCILLA, aged about 25 or 30 years; chunky built and well made, weighs about 145 pounds, black complexion, about 5 feet high, with one upper jaw tooth out next to her eye tooth on the left side of the face, which is discoverable when she laughs, a small scar on her left arm about two inches from the wrist joint under part of the arm, occasioned by a burn, if round it would be about the size of a half dollar, turns her toes out very much when walking, quick witted on close examination, is easily scared.—Twenty-five dollars reward will be given for the negro and \$200 for the apprehension and conviction of the thief on trial, or any white person harboring said negro. Any information concerning said negro will be thankfully received. SAMUEL RAULINS.

Lawrenceville, July 22

30 3m

Fig. 12. *Columbus Enquirer*, October 14, 1860

Some of the descriptions in runaway slave ads were quite explicit.

TWO HUNDRED DOLLARS REWARD.

RANAWAY from the subscriber, living in the town of Columbus, on the night of the 1st inst., a negro man named JOHN. Said negro is about 25 or 26 years of age, middle sized and straight built; weighs 160 or 170 pounds; large under lip, and his jaw teeth very rotten. Had on a steel mixt overcoat and pantaloons, red speckled shirt, and a dark snuff colored dress coat, half worn. He rode off a light chesnut sorrel Horse, large blaze in his face, about 15½ hands high; heavy made; one bare foot, the rest old shoes, probably all off by this time; rode a Spanish saddle with a black seat.

Said negro was purchased on the 14th November, 1838, of Neal Johnson and Alexander Johnson, of Thomas county, Ga. He will probably make for Thomas county or Apalachicola.

N. B. The boy can make figures and read writing, and the probability is he can write. I have no doubt he has free papers, either written by himself or some white man. The men from whom I purchased the negro passed by the names of Neal Johnson and Alexander Johnson, but I have reason to believe that these names were assumed for purposes best known to themselves. They stated that they were raised and lived in Thomas county, which I have since ascertained is not the fact. The elder, Neal, is a middle sized man, round face, large lips, intemperate, and a gambler; about 28 or 30 years old. The younger, Alexander, is quite a youth, thin visaged and weakly looking. They passed through Columbus in a one horse dearborn wagon, and had a faro box and other gambling implements. The above reward will be paid for the apprehension of the above described men, and the negro, should he be found in their possession, or the same reward for the apprehension and delivery to me of the negro alone.

WILLIAM OWENS.

Dec. 13, 1838.

45 3t

The Standard of Union, Milledgeville, Macon Telegraph, Apalachicola Gazette, Montgomery Advertiser, Savannah Georgian, Louisville (Ky.) Journal, Knoxville (Tenn.) Register, Natchez (Miss.) Free Trader, and N. O. Bulletin will insert the above three times, and send their accounts to the subscriber.

W. O.

Fig. 13. Columbus Sentinel & Herald, December 20, 1838

In the above ad, William Owens appears to have been the victim of a nefarious scheme concocted by a pair of professional gamblers. One cannot help but wonder if the escaped slave willfully participated in the ruse.

NEGRO HIRING
FOR 1861.




I have charge, as Executor of R. G. CARITHERS, dec'd, of SIX-TEEN NEGROES, which I will hire out, between this and the first Monday in January, upon private application. They are now ready to go with the hirer, whenever a contract to that purpose may be made. I will not permit them to be hired out of the State of Alabama. The main part of them are the very best of field or plantation negroes. Now is the time to get able-bodied and good disposed hands, on reasonable terms and right away. Apply to me, at my place 3 1/2 miles West of Girard, or to the overseer on the place, about six miles North of Girard and some three below Dover.

JOHN A. LEWIS,
[d3tw1:] Ex'r, &c.

Dec. 31, 1860

Fig. 14. *Columbus Daily Sun*, January 3, 1861

Slave hiring was quite common in the antebellum South. Owners with a surplus of slaves could hire out their bondsmen to plantation owners or industrialists, receiving a hefty fee in return.

HIRING.

WILL be hired to the highest bidder in Columbus, at the Court House, on the first Tuesday in January next, six or seven NEGROES, consisting of men, women and boys, until the 25th day of Dec. next. Among them is a first rate sawyer. Terms of hire made known on the day.

At the same time and place will be sold, on a credit of twelve months, a wagon and a five mule team. Small notes and good security, with interest from date unless punctually paid. **WILLIAM IVERSON.**
Dec. 8, 1838. 45 2t

LIKELY NEGROES TO HIRE,

THE subscriber has 18 or 20 likely Negroes to hire the ensuing year. If not disposed of at private hire, they will be hired on the first Tuesday in January next to the highest bidder before the door where the Superior Court is now held. Persons wishing to hire will please apply to the subscriber.
Dec. 13. 45 2t **B. V. IVERSON.**

NEGROES TO HIRE,

FROM the first of January next, by the month or year.
Dec. 13. **B. A. SORSBY.** 45 3t

Fig. 15. *Columbus Sentinel & Herald*, December 20, 1838

Typically, slave-hiring contracts were drawn up in late December or early January. Those hiring the slaves had to provide the bondsmen and women with decent shelter, food, and medical care.

Negroes at Executor's Sale.

BY authority of the last will and testament of John Stinson, late of Talbot county, Ga., deceased, I will sell before the Court House door, in the town of Talbotton, within the usual hours of sale, on the first Tuesday in December next:

Twenty-Seven Likely Negroes!

Consisting of Men, Women and Children. Sold for distribution between legatees of John Stinson, deceased.

JAMES M. STINSON, Ex'r.,
of John Stinson, deceased.

October 26, 1838

tds

Fig. 16. *Daily Columbus Ledger*, November 22, 1858

The death or financial ruin of a slave owner could prove devastating for the slaves. Families were routinely split up and sold off, then shipped "down river," far away from the community they had known their entire lives.

A PLANTATION And Negroes for Sale.

THE undersigned offers for sale a valuable *PLANTATION*, containing 400 acres, lying in this County, four miles and a half north of Columbus. There are 150 or 200 acres of open land under cultivation, and well fenced. There are on the premises a good dwelling, and all necessary out-houses, negro cabins, gin-house and screw.

—ALSO—

15 or 20 likely *NEGROES*, and *PLANTATION STOCK* of every description.

The whole will be sold at private sale, if possible, or if not sold before, at public outcry, in Columbus, on the first Tuesday in November next.

TERMS: Twelve months credit.

WM. E. MEALING.

Columbus, Ga., Sept. 19, 1850.

38

Fig. 17. *Southern Sentinel* (Columbus), September 26, 1850

The phrase "likely Negroes" is used in many slave ads. It simply means that the advertised slaves were suitable for whatever purposes the purchaser might choose to employ them.

Learning About the Past: Historic Columbus Foundation

by

Justin Krieg

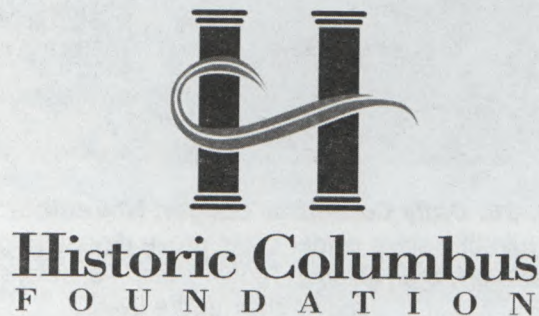


Fig. 1.

Courtesy of Historic Columbus Foundation

Among the oldest preservation organizations in Georgia, the Historic Columbus Foundation (HCF), founded in 1966, is one of the state's premier initiatives. Our mission is to REAP the benefits of historic revitalization for our citizens. We do this in four ways:

- Revitalize historic Columbus neighborhoods
- Educate the public about local and regional history
- Advocate the benefits that are derived from historic preservation
- Preserve the historical, architectural and cultural character of Columbus and its environs

The Foundation, which is governed by a Board of Directors, has a staff of six and an annual budget of nearly \$500,000. It operates six house museums, a revolving fund that totals approximately \$400,000, a façade loan program, a preservation grant program, heritage tour programs, and numerous educational programs that serve a wide range of audiences, from schoolchildren to seniors.

The Sarah Turner Butler Heritage Corner, a group of five historic house museums assembled through gifts to the Foundation, includes the home of Dr. John Stith Pemberton (see Figure 2), inventor of the formula for the world's most recognizable brand: Coca-Cola.

More than 75% of all Heritage Corner visitors are school groups, whose visits to the Corner are underwritten in part by Foundation funds. HCF is also fortunate to have a membership of over 1200, a large volunteer base, and long-time partnerships with the city of Columbus and many non-profit organizations and community groups.

Ours is an organization that advocates for preservation through representation on numerous boards, such as the Uptown Façade Board, Board of Historic and Architectural Review, Historic Chattahoochee Commission, Uptown Columbus, Inc., Friends of Ma Rainey, Historic Linwood Foundation, the Port Columbus Naval Museum, the Columbus Cultural Arts Alliance, and various Chamber of Commerce committees.

Through its affiliation with the Georgia and National Trusts for Historic Preservation, the Foundation has become part of a vast network of preservation groups across the state and nation. HCF has continuously played a vital role in changing the face of Columbus, yet is more involved today in community revitalization and preservation advocacy and education than ever before.

The Lower Second Avenue Revitalization Project

One of our long term and most exciting projects is the Lower Second Avenue Revitalization Project (see Figure 3). This project stems from a long-term commitment to revitalizing the original city of Columbus Historic District – an effort that dates back to the very beginning of the organization. Strategic acquisition of endangered properties is also a key element of this program. Properties such as the Fontaine Building, the Empire Building, City Mills, and the E.D. Martin House are significant structures that have been vacant and abandoned for many years. The Foundation's investment – coupled with additional private dollars and public partnerships – will make a difference for the future of these locally important structures.

Historic Columbus recently purchased a house at 429 Second Avenue. The purchase and rehabilitation of this property through our partnership with the Historic District Preservation Society has prompted the Board of Directors to commit to developing a revitalization strategy for the entire southeastern corner of the original city historic district. The lower Second Avenue block is one of the last key pieces to completing the revitalization efforts within that district.

The 429 Second Avenue property (see Figure 4) was purchased through HCF's Revolving-Redevelopment Fund with the goal of rehabilitating the house for resale to a sympathetic purchaser. Historically, HCF has invested heavily in the District, allocating 90% of its Revolving Funds there over the last few years. Many organizations are already committed to partnering with HCF on this project, including the city's Department of Code and Enforcement, the Historic District Preservation Society, 4th Street Towers, and the Columbus Housing Authority. With input from neighborhood residents and property owners, HCF is planning several streetscape design improvements within the district, ranging from sidewalks and signage to better lighting for safety and visual appeal.

By addressing the various barriers Columbus has to revitalization, this project will serve as a great opportunity for HCF to once again demonstrate to Columbus how reclaiming vacant properties promotes historic preservation, creates economic opportunity, and rebuilds neighborhoods.

Waverly Terrace Historic District

The Waverly Terrace Historic District has been identified as one of Historic Columbus's next target districts. Waverly Terrace originated in 1906 as the city of Columbus's first planned subdivision. At the turn of the century, the approximately twenty-five acres that would become Waverly Terrace lay on the northern outskirts of Columbus. The Jordan Company, headed by G. Gunby Jordan, began surveying the land in 1905. By 1929, most of the homes there had been completed and many of them survive in good condition to this day. The architectural styles in Waverly Terrace are varied and include Craftsman-Bungalow, Spanish Mission, late Victorian, neoclassical, and Georgian Revival. On December 1, 1983, Waverly Terrace became Columbus's second historic district.

Historic Columbus recently stumbled upon a unique opportunity to preserve a centerpiece property within the Waverly Terrace Historic District. Built in 1909, the United Congregational Church (see Figures 5 and 6), located at 2718 Beacon Avenue, has long served the Waverly Terrace community, but has recently been slated for demolition by the city of Columbus. Designed by a local architect, the church embodies the Gothic Revival style of architecture. Fortunately, the current leader of the congregation, Reverend James M. Johnson, has decided the building would be best left in the hands of Historic Columbus. Although the formal transfer of the property has not yet occurred, the paperwork is currently making its way through the proper channels.

Repairs to the church's roof, masonry walls, stained glass windows and interior woodwork are required. In November 2008, HCF's Preservation Committee (and eventually the Board of Directors) approved the use of Revolving Redevelopment funds up to \$80,000 to save and stabilize the building until a new use or owner could be determined. The church could potentially be used for office space, a community center, or for something compatible with the adjacent Academic Success Center and Teenage Pregnancy Center.

Another exciting possibility for the structure is for Historic Columbus to renovate the church after stabilization and move its offices there from its present location at the Rankin House. The move to Waverly Terrace would model our previous presence in the now vibrant Columbus Historic District. It would be our hope that by immersing ourselves once again in a specific community we could have a greater impact on the revitalization of the Waverly Terrace Historic District. The Rankin House could again become available to the community for special events, creating a positive revenue stream for the foundation.

Historic Columbus and our supporters realize that protecting our past is about more than just saving historic bricks and mortar. The history of Columbus is replete with a cast of colorful characters and intriguing tales of love, war, and commerce. Significant residential and commercial architecture and historic neighborhoods serve as tangible reminders of this history. All of these historic resources are important assets that need protection. Historic Columbus genuinely believes

preservation is a vital aspect of our ambition to create a community of healthy neighborhoods, where people are proud to live and raise families.



Fig. 2. The Pemberton House
Courtesy of Historic Columbus Foundation

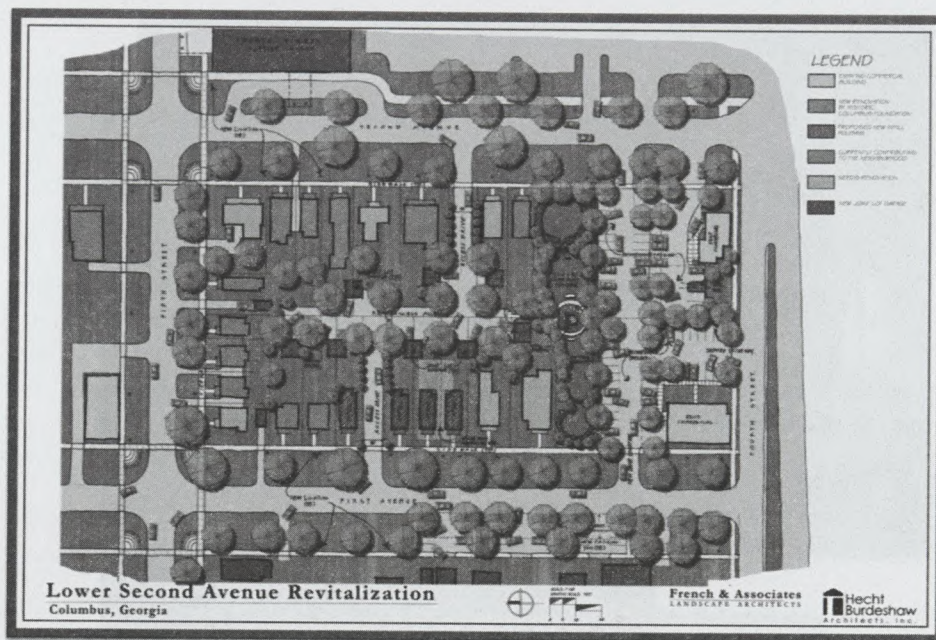


Fig. 3. Lower Second Avenue Revitalization Plan
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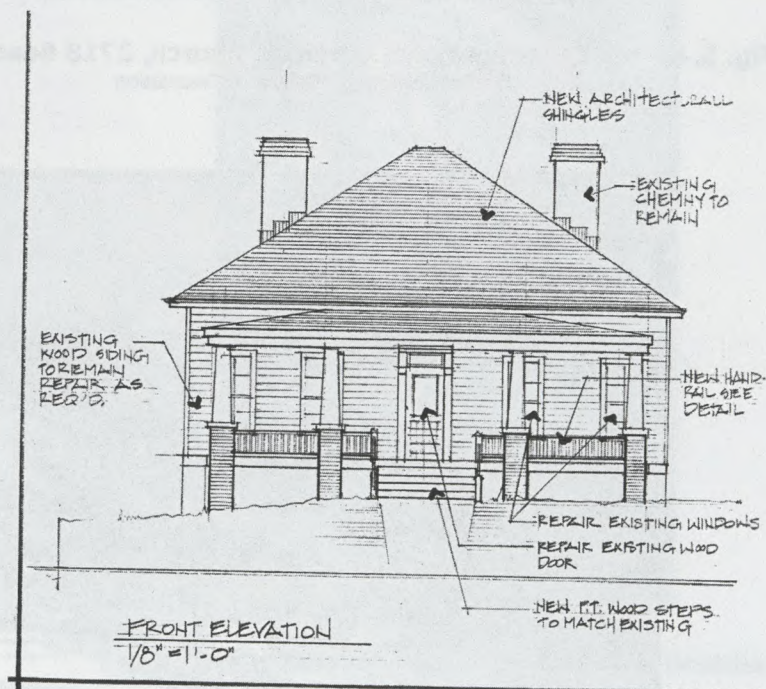


Fig. 4. 429 Second Avenue elevation
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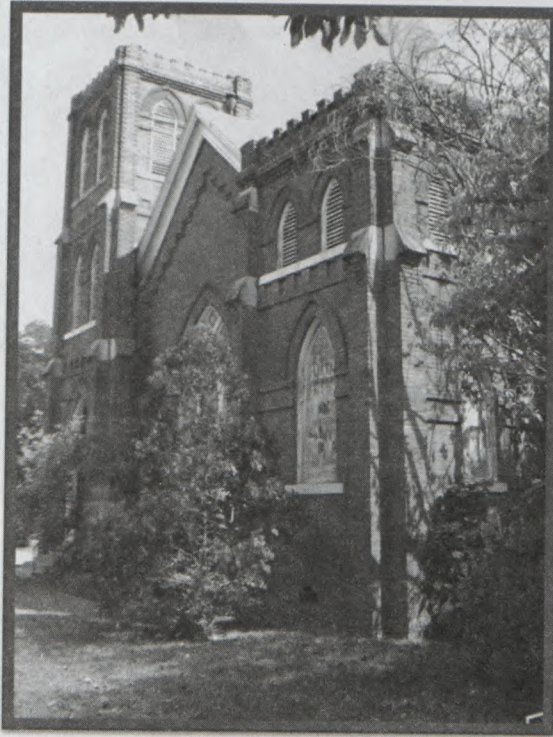


Fig. 5. United Congregational Christian Church, 2718 Beacon Avenue
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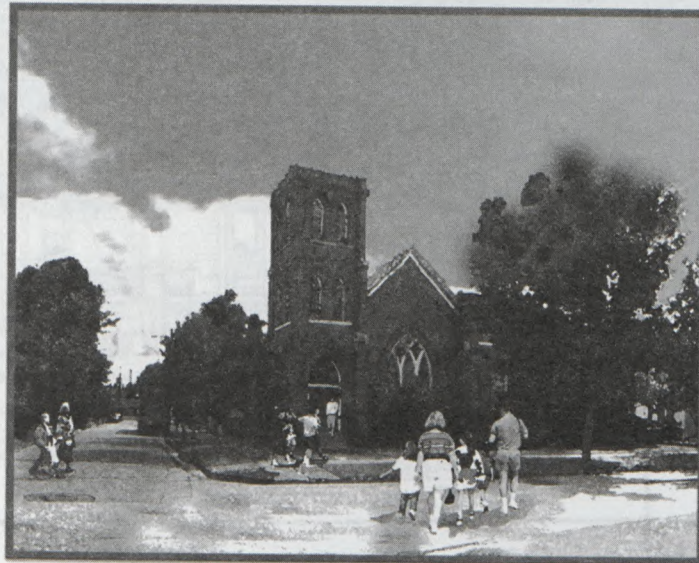


Fig. 6. United Congregational Christian Church
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Fig. 7. Walker-Peters-Langdon House, 716 Broadway
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Fig. 8. Janice Persons Biggers House, 700 Broadway
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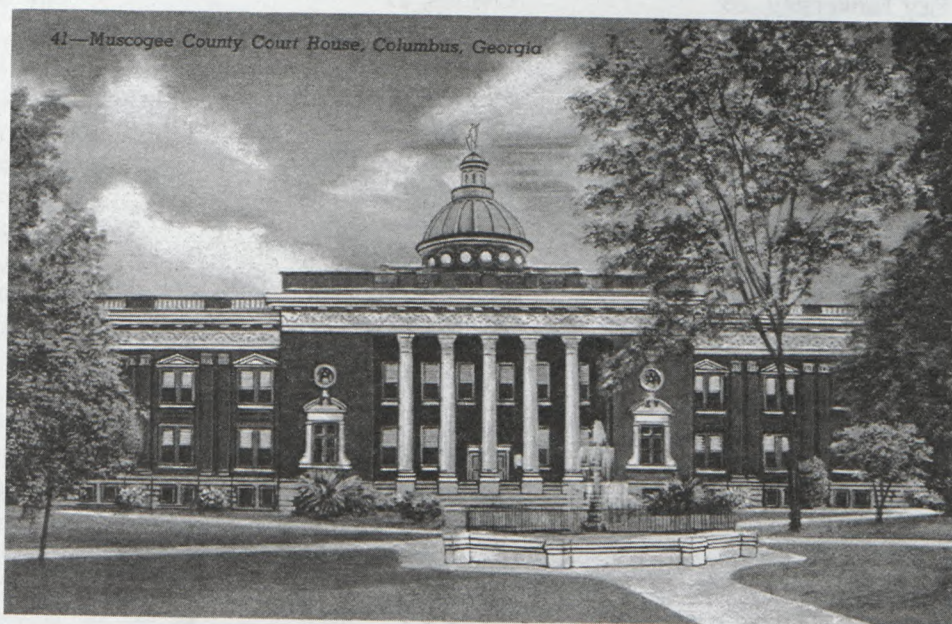
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41—Muscogee County Court House, Columbus, Georgia

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MUSCOGEE VOCAL SOCIETY

NOTES

The Muscogee Vocal Society is a non-profit organization dedicated to the preservation and promotion of the Muscogee language and culture. It was founded in 1985 and has since grown to become one of the largest and most active cultural organizations in the Southeastern United States.

The Society's primary focus is on the collection, preservation, and performance of traditional Muscogee songs, dances, and stories. It also provides educational programs for children and adults, and sponsors various cultural events throughout the year.

Membership in the Society is open to anyone interested in the Muscogee culture. There are three types of membership: Individual, Family, and Life. Individual membership is \$10.00 per year, Family membership is \$20.00 per year, and Life membership is \$500.00. All members receive a copy of the Society's newsletter and are eligible to vote in the annual election of officers.

The Society's annual meeting is held in January, and is a time for members to gather and celebrate the Muscogee culture. It is also a time for the Society to report on its activities and to elect new officers. The meeting is open to all members and their families, and is a great opportunity to learn more about the Muscogee culture and to meet other members of the Society.

The Society's publications include the newsletter, "The Muscogee Voice," which is published quarterly. It contains news about the Society's activities, as well as articles about the Muscogee culture and language. The Society also publishes a book of songs and dances, which is available for purchase from the Society's bookstore.

The Society's website, www.muscogeevocal.org, provides information about the Society's activities and membership. It also features a collection of Muscogee songs and dances, which can be downloaded and used for personal or educational purposes.

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The Society's financial statements are available for review by the public. They are posted on the Society's website and are also available for review at the Society's office. The Society's financial statements show that the Society is a financially sound organization that is committed to the preservation and promotion of the Muscogee culture.

The Muscogee Vocal Society is a proud member of the National Endowment for the Arts. It has received several grants from the NEA to support its cultural programs and activities. The Society is grateful for the support of the NEA and looks forward to continuing its partnership with the organization.

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